

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

EB-07 DHA-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 /077 W

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R 060939Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO :SECSTATE WASHDC 2853

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRETORIA 3791

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, EIND, SF

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON SOWETO: OPENING QUARTERS OF AMERICAN FIRM
IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. ECON COUNSELOR MET ON OCTOBER 2 MANIE MULDER, CHAIRMAN WEST RAND BANTU BOARD WHICH CONTROLS SOWETO AND HIS NUMBER TWO, E.F. DE VILLIERS AT OPENING NEW QUARTERS IN ROODEPORT (WEST OF JOHANNESBURG) OF AMERICAN MINING MACHINERY COMPANY, ROBBINS GROUP OF SEATTLE.

2. BOTH MULDER AND DE VILLIERS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT IMPACT OF INFLATION ON BLACK AFRICAN COMMUNITY. HOWEVER DE VILLIERS DOWNPLAYED POSSIBLE SPREAD OF TROUBLES TO SOWETO FROM NEW CASTLE OVER INCREASED BUS FARE (DURBAN 336). HE SAID THAT ANY SUCH REQUEST FROM THE BUSLINE CONCESSIONAIRE, PUTCO, BASED ON RISING FUEL PRICES (WHICH ARE DOUBTLESS IN OFFING) WOULD HAVE TO BE PROPOSED FIRST TO WEST RAND BOARD - AND THEREAFTER WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH SOWETO'S URBAN BANTU COUNCIL. THIS WOULD PROVIDE FOR FULL DISCUSSION AT LEAST OF REASONS BEFORE ANY INCREASE WAS PUT INTO EFFECT, HOPEFULLY DEFUSING ANY TROUBLE.

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EM WHILE THE FOREGOING WAS DELIVERED SOMEWHAT IN BOILER PLATE

FASHION, DE VILLIERS TURNED VEHEMENTLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT WHEN ASKED ABOUT MINISTERIAL ANNOUNCEMENT IN LAST PARLIAMENTARY SESSION CONCERNING 30-YEAR LEASEHOLDS FOR BLACK AFRICANS IN URBAN TOWNSHIPS. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN MADE HE SAID WITHOUT PROPER STAFF WORK IN THE BANTU AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT. DE VILLIERS SAID HE HAD BEEN TRYING FOR MONTHS TO GET THAT DEPARTMENT TO COME UP WITH THE NEEDED ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS. NOT ONLY DID HE HIMSELF HAVE RATHER SUBSTANTIAL PLANS FOR SOWETO, WHICH WERE PENDING, BUT THERE WAS HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR BECAUSE OF THEIR INTEREST IN HELPING THEIR BLACK WORKERS. HE THEN SAID THAT THE ASSOCIATION OF CHAIRMEN OF THE 22 URBAN BANTU BOARDS - A GROUP FOR WHICH HE WAS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY WAS MEETING THE BANTU DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS IN PRETORIA ON OCTOBER 21. HE INTENDED TO PRESS HARD FOR A DECISION AT THAT TIME.

4. MULDER, WHILE EXPANSIVE AND TALKING AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS ENJOYMENT OF HIS SEVERAL TRIPS TO THE U.S., HAD LESS TO CONTRIBUTE ALTHOUGH HE BLUNTLY PUT SOWETO POPULATION AT ONE MILLION (NOT THE OFFICIAL 650,000 ESTIMATE) DESCRIBING IT AS THE "BIGGEST CITY IN AFRICA" (PRESUMABLY SOUTH OF THE SAHARA). HE WAS ALSO PROUD OF HIS ORGANIZING A MIXED BLACK-WHITE SPORTS MEETING RECENTLY WHICH WENT OFF WITHOUT ANY INCIDENT. HE ATTRIBUTED ITS SUCCESS TO CLOSE SECRECY IN WHICH ARRANGEMENTS MADE THUS AVOIDING ANY PRESS.

5. ACTUAL CEREMONY OF OPENING NEW ROBBINS QUARTERS WAS TYPICAL LOVE FEAST BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICANS AND PRIVATE AMERICAN INTERESTS WITH MAIN FEATURE BEING ADDRESS BY MINISTRY OF MINES PIET KORNHOOF EULOGIZING ROBBINS TECHNOLOGY AND MACHINERY (FOR MINE BORING AND TUNNELING) AS MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICAN MINING IN ITS DRIVE FOR FURTHER MECHANIZATION TO IMPROVE LABOR PRODUCTIVITY.
BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC STABILITY, ANTIINFLATIONARY PROGRAMS, BUSINESS FIRMS, ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PRETOR03791
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750346-0095
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751078/aaaacrww.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 DEC 2003 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COMMENTS ON SOWETO: OPENING QUARTERS OF AMERICAN FIRM IN SOUTH AFRICA
TAGS: PINS, EIND, SF
To: SS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006